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POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, JULY–DECEMBER 1954: THE INCREASED ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES IN SOUTH VIETNAM; MEASURES TAKEN IN SUPPORT OF THE DIEM GOVERNMENT; THE BEGINNINGS OF AMERICAN AID PROGRAMS IN VIETNAM, LAOS, AND CAMBODIA

Eisenhower Library, Eisenhower papers, Whitman file

Memorandum of Discussion at the 207th Meeting of the National Security Council, Thursday, July 22, 1954 [1]

[Extracts]

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY

Present at the 207th meeting of the Council were the President of the United States, presiding; the Vice President of the United States; the Secretary of State; the Secretary of Defense; the Director, Foreign Operations Administration; and the Director, Office of Defense Mobilization. Also present were the Secretary of the Treasury; the Director, Bureau of the Budget; the Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission (Item 2); the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Director of Central Intelligence; the Assistant to the President; Robert Cutler, Special Assistant to the President; the White House Staff Secretary; Bryce Harlow, Administrative Assistant to the President; the Executive Secretary, NSC; and the Deputy Executive Secretary, NSC.

There follows a summary of the discussion at the meeting and the main points taken.

1. *Possible Use of ROK Forces in Indochina* [2] (NSC Actions Nos. 1054–*b* and 1147–*b*)

The National Security Council:

Adopted the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, concurred in by the Secretary of Defense, that the present U.S. policy with respect to the possible use of ROK forces in Indochina (NSC Action No. 1054–*b*) not be changed at this time, but be kept under review in the light of future developments.

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[1] Prepared by Deputy Executive Secretary Gleason on July 23.

[2] The decision recorded in this paragraph constituted NSC Action No. 1178, July 22, 1954. (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "NSC Actions") For NSC Action No. 1054, see extracts from the memorandum of discussion at the 187th Meeting of the Council, Mar. 4, p. 1093. For NSC Action No. 1147, see extracts from the memorandum of discussion at the 200th Meeting of the NSC, June 3, p. 1660.

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Note: The above action, as approved by the President, subsequently transmitted to the Secretary of Defense.

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3. *Disposition of Matériel Being Diverted From Indochina*[3]

The National Security Council:

Noted the following statement on the subject by the Secretary of Defense as read at the meeting:

1. The Army, Navy and Air Force have issued necessary instructions to stop movement of matériel into Indochina. Matériel which has departed the ports will be diverted or returned to port generally as follows:

a. The bulk of the matériel will be returned to the Z. I.

b. A great proportion of the ammunition that is presently enroute will be diverted to Formosa.

c. Certain small shipments which are part of a cargo on commercial vessels will be diverted to other countries where requirements for that equipment exist. Examples of this are Thailand, Formosa and a small part will go to AFFE.

2. The final disposition of the diverted equipment will be to expedite the build-up of MDAP matériel in other countries in the Far East South Pacific area such as Formosa, Thailand, Japan and the Philippines within existing programs.

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5. *Significant World Developments Affecting U.S. Security*

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Mr. [Allen] Dulles then commented on the Geneva settlement, using a map of Indochina. He pointed out that the great problem which would be faced by Vietnam would be how to maintain order in the south, where, to put it mildly, the French were extremely unpopular as a result of the partition. As evidence of this, Mr. Dulles said that the Vietnamese Foreign Minister had resigned, and that there were unconfirmed rumors that the Vietnamese Prime Minister would also resign. It was to be hoped that the French would not replace these officials with obedient puppets. If they did, the tragedy which had resulted in the loss of northern Vietnam would soon be repeated in the south.

Admiral Radford inquired whether the armistice agreement did not provide for the withdrawal of French forces from South Vietnam as soon as the Vietnam Government so requested. Mr. Dulles replied that while this was so, who would make the request for French withdrawal? Certainly not Bao Dai, since he was completely under French control.

[3] This item constituted NSC Action No. 1180, July 22, 1954. (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "NSC Actions")

Admiral Radford went on to express the view that the United States could not continue to send military matériel to the free states of Indochina, and he also inferred that we would be obliged to withdraw our Military Advisory and Assistance Group [*Military Assistance Advisory Group*] (MAAG). Curiously, however, he had received an inquiry from General Ely respecting U.S. plans to continue the training of the native armed forces. Ely had suggested that somehow or other it would be necessary to "get around" the armistice prohibitions. Mr. Dulles replied that it was quite clear that the United States could not have MAAGs in either Laos or Cambodia, according to the armistice provisions. This was not clear in the case of Vietnam.

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9. *The Geneva Conference*

Secretary Dulles said that he had very little to add to what was now general knowledge about the Geneva settlement. The Communist demands had turned out to be relatively moderate in terms of their actual capabilities. This relative moderation could perhaps be explained as resulting from one of two causes or a combination of both. The first was the Communist conviction that they will secure what they really want gradually in the course of time. Second was the Communist fear that if they demanded too much the adverse reaction in the free world, and particularly in the United States, would increase the danger of general war, which they do not want now.

As the Council knew, continued Secretary Dulles, the United States had taken the position at Geneva that it would neither endorse nor be a party to the actual settlement. We had continued to resist pressures to be a party to the settlement, and had issued our own independent unilateral declaration.

The great problem from now on out was whether we could salvage what the Communists had ostensibly left out of their grasp in Indochina. Secretary Dulles indicated, in this respect, that the State Department had been actively carrying on negotiations with the British, who seemed now willing to go ahead to make plans for the defense of the rest of Southeast Asia despite India. Present schedules call for getting going formally on discussions of the defense grouping for Southeast Asia by the end of August. Secretary Dulles thought that the real danger to be anticipated came not primarily from overt Communist military aggression but from subversion and disintegration. In view of this, he said that he would almost rather see the French get completely out of the rest of Indochina and thus permit the United States to work directly with the native leadership in these states. In answer to a question from Mr. Cutler as to whether or not the French would get out, Secretary Dulles said it was hard to reply. He thought

that if the French believed they could secure real control in South Vietnam and elsewhere, many of them would be anxious to stay on. However, Mendes-France at least took a more realistic view of colonialism and, besides this, was most anxious to cut French commitments in the area.

Secretary Dulles then spoke briefly of a possibly serious situation with respect to Congress. Not long ago, when it looked as though the French would cease their military effort in Indochina, the Congressional leaders had informally agreed that the unexpended balance of U.S. aid to assist the French war effort would not be withdrawn but could be used on a flexible basis to assist the remaining free areas of Indochina. This agreement for a flexible handling of this money was now threatened by the results of Geneva, and the members of Congress were anxious to forget their earlier agreement. Of course, continued Secretary Dulles, it was not possible to say at this moment precisely how much money should be spent in any one of the free countries of Southeast Asia, but all of them in general must be built up if the dike against Communism is to be held. Accordingly, Secretary Dulles appealed to all the members of the Council to stand fast on this position. The President in turn called on all those present to support the views expressed by Secretary Dulles on these funds, and indicated that those who could not support the Secretary of State should stay away from Capitol Hill.

Governor Stassen expressed the opinion that if we all stood together we could carry Congress along with the necessity for using the unexpended balance of the aid to Indochina in other states of the area.[4]

Mr. Cutler inquired of Secretary Dulles as to the possibility of getting any considerable number of free Asian states, especially the Colombo powers, into the Southeast Asian regional group, so that it would not appear to be just another white man's group. Secretary Dulles pointed out the two different aspects of the future regional grouping—a smaller one, primarily military in character and with relatively few Asian members at first, around which could perhaps be created a larger grouping of Asian states primarily for purposes of economic stability and growth.

The President expressed his strong support of this general concept.

The National Security Council: [5]

a. Noted and discussed an oral briefing by the Secretary of State on the outcome of the Geneva Conference, and possible developments which might follow in the immediate future.

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[4] For additional documentation on Congressional action regarding aid funds for Southeast Asia in light of the Geneva accords, see volume XII.

[5] Points *a* and *b* constituted NSC Action No. 1186, July 22, 1954. (S/S–NSC files, lot 66 D 95, "NSC Actions")

b. Agreed that the NSC Planning Board should review U.S. policies in the Far East in the light of the situation following the Geneva Conference.

751G.00/7–2254 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Dillon) to the Department of State

CONFIDENTIAL PARIS, July 22, 1954—2 p. m.

292. Repeated information Geneva 43, Saigon 21, London 68. Initial reaction of relief and satisfaction with Geneva settlement now being replaced by more sober realization of concessions which settlement entails. On Tuesday,[1] when news broke feeling was that Mendes had pulled off major coup; now it is rather that he has done best job under circumstances and that circumstances were highly unfavorable.

No longer anticipated that today's Assembly debate will be restricted to formal approval Mendes' actions.[2] Deputies had opportunity yesterday study and digest terms settlement and there are already rumblings on magnitude of concessions made (loss of Hanoi and Haiphong, sacrifice of 10,000,000 citizens of the French Union to Communism, effect on balance of Union, etc.) and reflection that someone, not Mendes, must be responsible for not having got better settlement earlier.

Many parliamentarians have made public statements ranging from references to "Munich" to sweeping eulogies of Mendes. Marc Jacquet, former Minister for Associated States, and some MRPs are quoted as saying that better terms would have been arrived at earlier under Bidault.

In keeping with tradition, only one interpellation (Valabregue, Radical, friendly to Mendes) has been filed for today's debate but many speakers will comment on it. They include Bidault, whose intervention is most anxiously awaited. If he is highly critical of government, debate may lead to "opening of dossiers" but in our opinion Bidault is too astute a politician to attempt buck government at this moment when Mendes' prestige is so high.

Although Communists will probably vote with government, anticipated they will do so quietly for speaker they have inscribed, Waldeck-

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[1] July 20.

[2] The Geneva Conference settlement was debated in the National Assembly on July 22 and July 23. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Assembly approved a resolution expressing satisfaction with the cessation of hostilities in Indochina and supporting government policy. The vote was 471 to 14. For the record of these proceedings, including statements by Premier Mendès-France supporting the accords, an attack on the settlement by former Foreign Minister Bidault, and the text of the resolution adopted, see France, *Journal Officiel, Assemblée Nationale, 1954, Débats*, pp. 3533–3547 and 3573–3589. The Embassy in France commented at length on the debate in despatch 282 of Aug. 2. (751G.00/8–254)